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SUBJ: MOLDOVAN ANTI-CORRUPTION OFFICIALS LEARN TO MEET THE PRESS

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11. (SBU) Summary: A three-day assistance program in Chisinau boosted the ability of Moldova's anti-corruption bureau, the Center for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption (CCECC), to meet Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold Country Plan (MCC TCP) goals of transparency, integrity and accountability. The program offered by U.S. and Council of Europe (COE) officials trained bureau leaders on the skills and tools needed to interact more openly with the members of the media, who are taking on a key role in monitoring government activities on behalf of Moldovan citizens under the TCP. As a result of this program, the CCECC has planned an open house for members of the media - a first ever for the CCECC, which has to date been a very conservative and closed institution. End summary.

TCP and Facilitators Train Media and Corruption Center

12. (SBU) Co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice OPDAT, Millennium Challenge Corporation and the COE's MOLICO Project, training sessions from April 22 to 25 introduced best practices in terms of media relations and public outreach to CCECC officials, and culminated in a conference with members of the Moldovan print and television media aimed at strengthening CCECC relations with the mass media. The training sessions were staffed by experts and representatives from the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Utah, Radio Free Europe, and the Council of Europe. The training and conference were conducted under the aegis of Moldova's TCP, Components Two and Five, which undertake to improve transparency, integrity and trustworthiness at the CCECC by encouraging activities to prevent corruption.

Background: The Anti-Corruption Center and the TCP

13. (SBU) In September, 2006, Moldova signed a Threshold Country Plan (TCP) with the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The TCP recognizes that corruption is Moldova's primary developmental challenge and ultimate barrier to achieving economic growth and poverty reduction. The MCC and Moldova pledged a joint effort to reduce corruption through proactive policies, greater involvement of civil society and system-wide reforms. The Government of Moldova (GOM) created the CCECC in 2002 as a specialized anti-corruption bureau. This became part of a national strategy to fight corruption. Under Component 5 of the TCP, DOJ OPDAT is assisting the GOM with institutional and procedural reforms at the CCECC.

Encouraging Media-Center Synergy

14. (SBU) Under the TCP, media should play an important role in monitoring GOM activities, including activities at the CCECC.

Historically, relations between media and the CCECC were very limited and often strained. The aim of the conference was to show Center personnel new methods for communicating with media representatives and to bring both groups to an improved understanding of the functions, responsibilities, and methods that could lead to better interaction.

Training and Objectives

15. (SBU) CCECC officials attending included a Vice Director, section chiefs, deputy chiefs of section and the Superior Inspector of the Section for External Relations, Protocol, and Mass Media. Training sessions defined the role of a public information officer; advanced the mission and effectiveness of the CCECC; and, identified and developed steps to strengthen relations between the CCECC and mass media.

16. (SBU) Specifically, experts described the role of a public information officer; ways of working with the media and projecting a positive public image; conducting a press interview and news conference; writing a press release; preparing a press packet; and dealing with the media during crises. To learn interview techniques, CCECC participants engaged in role-playing that included on-camera interviews and individual critique.

Media-Center Interaction

17. (SBU) At the conference, CCECC personnel and twenty journalists participated in panel discussions and open questions relating to the barriers between the CCECC and media, while recognizing the

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symbiotic relationship between the CCECC and the media. Participants discussed how the media and the CCECC might work together to inform and educate the public, and concrete steps to improve relations between the media and the CCECC. Looking ahead, the CCECC announced a future open house for media representatives at the CCECC. Several media representatives offered an opportunity for the CCECC to write articles to be published in an unedited format.

18. (SBU) Comment: Both the training program and conference were a success. While there is much that remains to be done, many participants acknowledged that both sides had demonstrated tangible changes in attitude and approach. These important steps forward have occurred against a backdrop of limited transparency and minimal progress in MCC TCP efforts, under Components 2 and 5, during the past year. We hope that the events of April 22 through 25, combined with the recent appointment of a reform-friendly, technocratic Prime Minister, foreshadow an increase in openness and progress in media and governmental relations.

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